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Letter dated 9 July 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that the Government of Lebanon requests the Security Council to extend the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which expires on 31 July 2004, for an additional period of six months under Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978), both of 19 March 1978. The request stems from the need for UNIFIL to continue its work in the South in order to complete the mission entrusted to it under those resolutions. This is in accord with the conclusion correctly reached by you in your periodic reports to the Security Council, namely that an important part of the mandate of UNIFIL has yet to be fulfilled, especially with regard to restoring international peace and security in the region.

The need for the presence of UNIFIL has become even more pressing in the light of the continued and renewed grave violations committed by Israel by land, air and sea and the provocative aerial violations carried out by that State on a daily basis, all of which constitute violations of the Blue Line, as well as constant attacks against Lebanon's sovereignty and threats to its security and safety in flagrant contravention of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). You rightly characterized those violations as "provocative" in paragraph 26 of your most recent report on UNIFIL to the Security Council (S/2004/50), dated 20 January 2004. Similarly, the Security Council focussed on those violations in its latest resolution on UNIFIL (1525 (2004)), characterizing them in operative paragraph 7 as "continuing" violations "that could further escalate the tension" in the region.

Lebanon also deems it important to mention that in 2000 the United Nations did not ensure Israeli withdrawal from all Lebanese territory to the internationally recognized boundaries as set forth in resolution 425, but rather to a de facto withdrawal line known as the "Blue Line", which Lebanon has respected until now, despite the fact that it previously registered and continues to uphold its reservation in that regard, especially in respect of three points on the Line which it considers as not matching the internationally recognized boundaries. Lebanon therefore reaffirms its legitimate right to the return of the remaining parts of occupied Lebanese territory.

In this context, Lebanon emphasizes that maintaining the UNIFIL mandate as provided in Security Council resolutions 425 and 426 will constitute a reaffirmation of the international community's commitment to restoring the sovereignty of Lebanon over all its territory and the strong support for Lebanon's territorial

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integrity, sovereignty and political independence within its internationally recognized boundaries evinced by the Security Council in its successive resolutions on the matter, the most recent of which is resolution 1525 (2004).

I take this opportunity to commend, on behalf of the Government of Lebanon, the efforts of the command and members of UNIFIL and the efforts and sacrifices made by the States participating in UNIFIL in carrying out the Force's mandate.

Lebanon greatly appreciates the ongoing participation of the United Nations Interim Force in demining operations and the efforts of donor States in that area. Inasmuch as it has become clear to the United Nations that there remain further maps and other documents indicating the locations of the mines left by the Israeli occupation in Lebanese territory, Lebanon calls on the Security Council to pressure Israel to hand over the rest of those documents. The mines continue to cause death and injuries to Lebanese civilians and curtail their freedom of action and movement. In addition, they hamper the movements of UNIFIL and interfere with the performance of its mission within its area of operation, endangering the lives of individuals working in UNIFIL and persons carrying out demining operations. Lebanon further calls on the Security Council to work to secure the release of all Lebanese unlawfully detained in Israeli prisons, in some cases for many years, in flagrant violation of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the protocols additional to those conventions.

Lebanon desires to reaffirm its commitment to the peace process in the Middle East aimed at the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the region based on international legitimacy, the Madrid Conference and the principle of land for peace and in accordance with the integrated Arab peace initiative unanimously adopted at the Beirut Summit on 28 March 2002 and approved by the Security Council.

The Government of Lebanon expresses to you its appreciation for your untiring efforts in support of the role of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

I should be grateful if you have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Sami **Kronfol**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative